

Primary Source: Letter Promoting the Good Roads Movement

The following is a letter from W. A. McGirt to Governor Bickett in 1918. The letter called for better road conditions in the state of North Carolina.

Wilmington, N.C Dec. 31st, 1918
Hon. Thos. W. Bickett, Governor
Raleigh, North Carolina.

My Dear Governor,

I enclose here-with copy of a resolution which was adopted at the North Carolina Good Roads convention held at Wrightsville Beach, August 1918.

The resolution sets forth in detail the vital need for some system of taxation by which the building of a State System of roads in this State will be assured.

Knowing that you are in sympathy with all that tends to advance the progress and development of the State, and feeling assured that you fully appreciate the fact that North Carolina, if she would keep step with other progressive states, must wake up to the vital necessity of creating a better state-wide system of public highways, I am appealing to you to give the movement referred to in the resolution enclosed, our undivided support and hearty co-operation.

Is it not a fact that loose and haphazard methods of providing for the building and maintenance of our highways, have proven a miserable failure? It seems to me that the deplorable condition of many of our public highways fully answers the question in the affirmative.

If that be true, then are we doing our part as patriotic citizens of North Carolina, if we fail to provide some better and surer way of increasing the efficiency of the public road system of the State?

We must also consider the fact that Congress will undoubtedly make large Federal appropriations very soon for the building of National highways. The apportionment of these funds will be based on a cooperative arrangement, of dollar for dollar. It will, therefore, be necessary for the General Assembly to make available a sufficient state fund, if the State is to be in a position to take advantage of these federal funds.

There is an urgent need of a State system of roads, so that the people of each county can gain easy access to these National highways, to adjoining counties and markets, and to other sections of the State and Nation.

At the coming session of the Legislature, a bill will be presented providing for this need. This will be one of the greatest opportunities the people of North Carolina have ever had to put the State along with other progressive states.

I trust that you will give this bill your support and will use your influence to insure its passage.

With best wishes for the New Year, I am

Faithfully yours.
W. A. McGirt, President

Ten Reasons Why North Carolina Should Have State Highways

1. **BECAUSE:** The present inadequate system of public roads in North Carolina constitutes our greatest economic drain. Good roads are an asset, bad roads are a liability.
2. **BECAUSE:** The success of the agricultural industrial, economic, and social life of our State depends largely upon transportation, -- **RAILROADS** and **STATE HIGHWAYS**.
3. **BECAUSE:** The introduction of the automobile and motor truck has rapidly changed the character of travel. State highways are absolutely necessary to meet these changes.
4. **BECAUSE:** State Highways will mean improved school facilities, more churches, better farms, quicker communication, reduction in cost of transportation and generally improved conditions, moral, social and economical.
5. **BECAUSE:** A complete system of State Highways will carry light into dark places, build up and improve the morals of our citizens, and induce good people to settle in our midst.
6. **BECAUSE:** We must look beyond the County line, **STATE CONSTRUCTION** and **maintenance** make for broad vision and high ideals. The West should be linked with the East, the North with the South, -- we should know each other better.
7. **BECAUSE:** Highways constructed and maintained by the State mean "equal rights to all, special privileges to none."
8. **BECAUSE:** Prosperity is headed our way and it is absolutely necessary that the State provide a fund for road

construction to be able to take advantage of the Government's offer of **FEDERAL AID**. Other states are making preparation, -- North Carolina must do likewise.

9. **BECAUSE:** More and better roads can be built and properly maintained by the State than through hundreds of local units. County and Townships will never provide a complete system, -- it is up to the State.
10. **BECAUSE:** Every individual in the State of North Carolina will benefit directly or indirectly from a system of public roads and, therefore, should contribute towards their construction.

PROVIDE THE FUND -- LEVY THE TAX — BUILD THE ROADS.

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Good Roads Campaign

Good Roads Everywhere: Charles Henry Davis and the National Highways Association
from the US Department of Transportation

Primary Sources:

Better Roads

from the National Museum of American History

Maps of the Good Roads Movement
from Library of Congress

Artifacts:



According to the photographer, this automobile was parked in a tree as a warning to drivers.



[1]

Dirt roads turned to mud and made travel difficult for horses and wagons -- but impossible for early automobiles. This automobile was stuck in the mud of Johnston County, 1909.

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